

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 11, 1983

83-73

Students See Growth Results
With MasterLife Program

By Gail Rothwell

NORMAN, Okla. (BP)--Max Barnett believes disciples are made, not born.

Barnett, who has been the Baptist Student Union director at the University of Oklahoma at Norman since 1967, says of approximately 375 students involved in BSU ministry activities each week, more than 130 participate in MasterLife, an in-depth discipleship course developed by the Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

The 26-week program helps Christians develop the disciplines of devotional life, prayer, fellowship, ministry and witnessing.

Led by staff members Linda Cole and John Harrington, 112 Oklahoma students meet in 11 MasterLife II groups and 24 students meet in two MasterLife I groups. During the week Barnett leads the staff through the program. Cole and Harrington then meet with student leaders for an hour and a half on Wednesday mornings.

All MasterLife groups meet Monday evening for two hours. Students must spend an additional eight to ten hours each week in individual preparation and ministry activities.

Harrington said the devotion and commitment of students has been overwhelming and the dropout rate very low: "We started with about 145 students in September and most of those who dropped out did so in the first few weeks."

Barnett and his staff spend time discipling students because, "people must have help in their walk with God." Jesus did not have just a ministry of healing and preaching, he pointed out but spent time with his disciples teaching them how to live.

Barnett chose to use MasterLife because "it ties in with what the denomination is doing in discipleship. It also provides a concise package of materials that helps students add quality and depth to their spiritual lives."

MasterLife, according to Barnett, will give students a common bond with a local church. "When a student who has gone through MasterLife leaves here and goes to a staff position in a church, he and the pastor will have a common tool for training leaders."

Sophomores are encouraged to participate in MasterLife so they will be equipped to lead a Bible study or MasterLife group during their remaining years on campus.

"I have seen a lot of changes take place in the lives of these students," Harrington said. "For some it has helped to define their ministry, others have been assured of their salvation and many have been able to establish a discipline of prayer and devotion."

Since this is only the first year MasterLife has been used on the Oklahoma campus, BSU leaders are excited about the potential for growth.

"I can see MasterLife producing more disciples, increasing campus evangelism and equipping students to be better campus leaders and later better church leaders," Barnett said.

MasterLife has been taught in 80 countries to more than 35,000 persons since its introduction in the fall of 1980.

RTVC's Allen Says All Systems Go
For May '84 Launch Of TV Network

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Some parts of the puzzle are falling into place faster than others, but Jimmy Allen says all will be positioned for launch of the ACTS network in May 1984.

Allen has set that date for the start of daily, national TV broadcasts by Southern Baptists through the American Christian Television System (ACTS). It will be the end of the beginning of Allen's 30-month plan and longtime dream to give Baptists a consistent gospel witness on television.

Late in 1980, Allen, president of the SBC's Radio and Television Commission (RTVC), went to work on an idea to deliver family and Christian TV programs by satellite to American homes. Much has changed since the plan first took shape. Low-power television (LPTV), thought to be the key to the SBC entry into telecommunications ministry, is now only one factor in a broad strategy that includes cable TV systems and educational TV stations.

What hasn't changed is Allen's determination, which has weathered complicated and capricious signals from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the various way stations of Baptist policymaking. "I keep learning that the Father's timing is not my timing," Allen said. "I have to remember that I'm in sales and he's in management."

But as ACTS enters the last year of preparation for the most massive communications effort ever attempted by a Christian denomination, there are indications the plan has hit its stride. ACTS is on schedule with all three components of the strategy--daily network programs, a satellite to deliver the programs and a network of stations and cable systems to carry them.

The FCC recently removed the last obstacle to full-speed licensing of low-power television stations. Reversing their position of a year ago, the seven FCC commissioners unanimously agreed to use random selection, or lottery, in choosing between applicants for the same LPTV channel. The move will avoid the lengthy and expensive legal hearings that threatened to bring low-power licensing to a standstill.

The lottery procedure, which will be conducted by computer, gives minority broadcasters a two-to-one advantage over other applicants. These preferences favor ACTS since the five-member ACTS board of directors includes three minority members and since ACTS currently owns no broadcast facilities. ACTS has filed 133 low-power applications in 35 states.

The lottery promises to handle 250-350 LPTV applications per month, beginning with the rural areas and progressing to the more populous TV markets. It is expected to take three years to divide up the 4,000 available stations among the 12,000 applicants.

Faced with the prospect that few of ACTS' low-power stations would be ready when its satellite is placed in orbit in 1984, Allen's attention turned to other means of delivering ACTS programs to homes. Cable, first considered as a way to extend the reach of LPTV stations, emerged as the vehicle to get ACTS into communities ahead of low-power. Many of these systems are required to carry public affairs and/or religious shows and Allen reported cable operators are increasingly receptive to ACTS when they see the quality and integrity of its programming.

RTVC consultants are helping churches negotiate contracts with local cable companies to carry ACTS in their communities. Called ACTS Church Cable Affiliates, these churches or groups of churches can receive ACTS programs on their own satellite receiver dishes and relay the signal to the local cable system. For less than the cost of a low-power station, these cable affiliates often can reach as many or more viewers. Allen said the church cable affiliates will be the primary delivery system for the initial stages of ACTS.

Educational TV applications have been filed in Fort Worth, Houston and San Francisco by groups planning to use ACTS programs. Eight-to-ten others are in various stages of planning. Although the stations cost much more to build than LPTV's, they have fewer limitations. They have the same broadcast range as other fullpower stations, are mandatorily carried on all local cable systems and do not face the licensing bottleneck of low-power.

Allen said other groups with low-power and full-power stations are now coming to ACTS looking for quality programming. Many are entrepreneurs caught in the rush to LPTV who were granted some of the early licenses but have nothing to air. Such opportunities will be studied carefully as a way to expand the reach of ACTS even further, Allen said.

Allen has repeatedly said the programming is the key to the network's success. While few people notice if a program comes from cable TV, full-power or low-power, they do notice when a program is good. As the primary program supplier for ACTS, the Radio and Television Commission has begun work on 29 series for the network. Most will be produced by the RTVC or on a contract basis. Some will be purchased from outside producers.

A tentative schedule has been worked out for 16 hours of daily broadcasting via satellite: six hours of new programming each day, with other programs being repeated for 10 hours. No programs will be repeated on the same day or at the same time of day.

Six programs are already in production. They are "Invitation to Life," a weekly evangelistic program; "Sunshine Factory," a daily children's program; "Profile," weekly biographies of prominent and interesting Southern Baptists; "In Concert," a series of musical and dramatic performances; "The Plant Groom," featuring horticulturist Dale Groom, and "The David Wade Show," a weekly cooking program.

Other programs are in preproduction, with taping scheduled to begin as early as June. Three are based on successful RTVC radio programs--"Powerline," "Country Crossroads" and "Baptist Hour." Others include a weekly feature magazine, a topical women's program, a college Bible quiz show taped at Glorieta and Ridgecrest, a weekly how-to series on home repair and programs for singles and the elderly. Other planned series include a daily talk show, a daily call-in counseling program and a weekly health-oriented show.

The vital link in getting these programs to the network of TV stations and cable outlets is the satellite. In 1981 the RTVC signed a contract for a long-term lease on the Spacenet I satellite, scheduled for launch next spring. A recent failure in the rocket that will place the satellite in space may cause a short delay in Spacenet start up. But Allen said if that happens short-term satellite rental will take up the slack.

Despite the expense, Allen insists ACTS will not resort to on-the-air pleas for money. While such methods are indispensable for most religious broadcasters, Allen said they alienate too many viewers, particularly nonChristians, and take time away from sharing the gospel.

ACTS will pay for its programming, (estimated to cost \$3.3 million for the first year) through the RTVC's Cooperative Program funding, direct mail and major donations. Local stations will be built and cable contracts will be paid for by participating churches or institutions. Stations and churches who receive ACTS programming will share in the \$175,000-per-month satellite delivery costs. Full-power stations will pay \$1,000 per month, low-power stations \$500 per month and churches 10 cents per month for each resident member.

ACTS also has developed a system of commercial recognitions, similar to those used in public television, that will air during ACTS programs. This is expected to raise about \$100,000 per month from corporations, foundations and other supporters. Allen estimates ACTS can collect \$162,000 per month from the start, and double that the second year.

By May Allen expects to have in place 200 cable affiliates, 20 LPTV's and three educational stations, delivering ACTS programs. But even if ACTS makes those goals, it won't be soon enough for Allen. "We're late," he said of Baptists' entry into telecommunications ministry. "Many of us have been saying that for a long time. But there are some advantages to being late. You can learn from someone else's putt.

"We feel we have the right time, when broadcast technology is now within our reach. And we feel we have the right strategy because it centers the message where God has centered it-- in Jesus Christ and the local church."

SBC 'Moderates' Frustrated;
Trim Plans For Pittsburgh

By Stan Hasteley and Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention "moderates" will make no organized efforts at this year's annual meeting in Pittsburgh to challenge incumbent president James T. Draper Jr., or persons nominated as trustees to agencies and institutions.

Meeting in Atlanta five weeks before the SBC gathers June 14-16 in Pittsburgh, the core group of moderate leaders, numbering about 30 pastors, concluded Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, is not vulnerable to a challenge to reelection to the second, one-year term customarily given SBC presidents.

According to several members of the group, the decision not to bring challenges to the report of the powerful committee on boards was reached after a study of the list of nominees revealed no individuals with glaring weaknesses akin to those of nominees successfully challenged during the past two annual meetings.

Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., and one of the founding members of the faction, was critical of the report of the committee on boards, released May 4, by Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, and committee chairman.

"All we have done on the floor of the convention previously is to eliminate the deformities, the eccentricities and the deviates," he said, referring to successful challenges the past two years, in which persons who did not use Sunday School Board literature were named to the Sunday School Board, or did not give to Cooperative Program causes but were named to agencies supported by the CP, were replaced.

"This committee on boards has removed the eccentrics, the strange people. It is filled with people who are doctrinaire, narrow. They are one kind of Baptist. They are people who have a low estimate of our schools and publishing house, are basically critical of the denomination, but continue to give some kind of support to it.

"This committee on boards has surgically excised the kind of Southern Baptists who will not conform (to their kind of fundamentalism). The exclusion is not an accident; it is a very meticulous thing," Sherman said.

David Sapp, pastor of First Baptist Church of Chamblee, Ga., added the report "is pretty right wing...representing only one element of the convention. It would be hard to attack, however."

Another leader of the moderate group, M. Vernon Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Va., told Baptist Press the moderates probably will nominate candidates for first and second vice president. Unlike the traditional second one-year term offered a sitting SBC president, vice presidents traditionally have served only one year. However, nothing in the denomination's by-laws forbids vice presidents from being renominated.

Another moderate who participated in the Atlanta meeting, Bedford, Va. pastor Howard V. Pendley, said the moderates' agenda in Pittsburgh will be "issue oriented." Moderates will be alert to any "bad resolutions" that might be proposed, he said, as well as to efforts to amend the 1983-84 Cooperative Program budget "to punish any of our agencies and institutions or individuals."

Persistent reports indicate some within the conservative, or fundamentalist, wing of the denomination will seek to delete funding for the Washington, D.C.-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The agency, composed of the SBC and seven other U.S. Baptist bodies, works for the preservation and enhancement of religious freedom and separation of church and state. It has been under fire for the past year for opposing President Reagan's proposed amendment to the Constitution to return state-authored prayers to public school classrooms.

Another possible budget move by fundamentalists would be a challenge to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., which recently announced veteran theology professor Dale Moody will not return to the classroom after the current academic year but will stay on the seminary payroll during 1983-84. Moody has been at the center of a theological firestorm in recent months because of his view the Bible teaches that Christians can "fall from grace."

Despite its more limited projected agenda for the Pittsburgh convention, the moderate movement is still alive, according to its leaders. "We feel there is going to be a need for the foreseeable future for people who believe in our institutions and believe in our historic directions to work to preserve these institutions and values," Davis said. "We believe the threat to them is very real and continuing."

Pendley said despite his view past moderate strategy "has not borne the fruit we had hoped for," the group "is not going out of business. We are not going away. We are not surrendering," he insisted.

He said moderates have suffered from a "perceptual problem," particularly in the denominational press and among leaders of SBC agencies and institutions. "We are seen as troublemakers, contentious, boat rockers, but at this point we are doing the only thing we are permitted to do as Southern Baptists."

The denominational press, and particularly editors of state Baptist newspapers, are "either unaware of what is going on, unwilling to acknowledge it, or afraid to expose what is going on," he said. While admitting Baptist editors have not generally treated the moderates "unkindly," he added: "Basically, we have not been treated at all."

Pendley specifically criticized those editors who have chosen to call recent SBC presidents peacemakers when their appointments to key committees and some of their public statements "have contradicted that."

He also was critical of "most" denominational executives who, he said, "have not been supportive" of the moderates despite their primary objective "to preserve the moderate character of our agencies and institutions" and to help keep them "from going off the right wing."

Instead of rallying to the cause, he added, many heads of agencies and institutions "have aligned themselves with or allowed themselves to be aligned with the fundamentalists."

Admitting to a sense of frustration among moderate leaders "because we feel we have a lot of potential in the Pittsburgh convention that we will not be able to deliver," Davis said moderate momentum has been thwarted by Draper's performance as president and by the fact that members of the committee on boards "seem to have done their homework very well."

Pendley, granting that "the other side has learned from its mistakes of the past," said it is now time for the moderates to reassess their strategy. "We are not, as a group, politically astute," he said, "but we are learning."

Despite a feeling that moderates are being "painted out of the convention," Davis likewise declared the battle is not over. Although "it's hard to be a flaming moderate," he said, "we are people who love our denomination" and are determined "to hang in there."